SOUTH COUNTY ALTERNATIVES, INC.

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Blank walls take on new look with colorful mural projects

A mural project to spruce up previously blank walls is under way at Eliot School and the recreation room at Gilroy Apartments, 500 IOOF Ave.

Coordinated through The Owl with CETA (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act) funds, the Tecolate Corps is hard at work painting the walls in the mural project that started in mid-January.

Lending assistance and offering advice on the art work are Ray Romo and Ralph D'Oliveira, members of the Watsonville based Tortuga Patrol composed of artists living in the southern Santa Cruz County area.

Mural themes are universal in nature with one at Eliot stressing a new life available through schooling. The Gilroy Apartments work is based on Indian imagery and features a giant eagle clutching a banner in his beak in the center.

In the Aztec culture, the eagle is the supreme diety and made in the image of the creator who manifests himself as an eagle. Behind the eagle is a colorful sunburst; in the Mayan culture, the sun is the center of the universe.

Those enrolled in the Tecolate Corps are paid $3 an hour for 25 hours a week which includes time in the classroom for them to become aquainted with job possibilities and requirements in a variety of fields.

The student workers are learning many facets of painting including surface preparation and selection of paint. Before work began at Eliot, members conferred with the school district painter who offered advice.

They are shown different techniques ranging from that needed for sign painting to self-expression art.

The design motif at Eliot is based on a design at the ancient Mexican city of Mitla, the home of Indian priests.

"Art is a very powerful medium," Romo said adding that through art they hope to make an impression to improve pride in the community. They are not actively seeking places to paint murals but persons interested in finding out about the program are invited to call The Owl at 842-3118.